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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mrs. CAPITO).

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 17, 2005.

I hereby appoint the Honorable SHELLY MOORE CAPITO to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer: The following is an adaptation to what is sometimes referred to as George Washington's prayer for this country:

"I now make this my earnest prayer: that God would have you and the State over which you preside in His holy protection; that He would incline the hearts of citizens to cultivate a spirit of respect and obedience for government, and develop a strong affection and love for one another as fellow citizens of the United States, especially for those who serve in our military; and finally that He would graciously dispose all of us to do justice, to love mercy and conduct ourselves with that charity, humility and peaceful disposition which are characteristic of Divine Authorship. Without such virtues, we can never hope to be a happy Nation." Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House her approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. DEFAZIO led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Monahan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed a bill of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 384. An act to extend the existence of the Nazi War Crimes and Japanese Imperial Government Records Interagency Working Group for 2 years.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain up to five requests for 1-minute from each side.

STEM CELL RESEARCH

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Madam Speaker, there is no ban or gag on stem cell research. In fact, more than 15,000 patients will benefit from stem cell research this year. However, we need to distinguish between the types of stem cells. Embryonic stem cell research has resulted in no cures for diseases. Aside from the destruction of embryos, embryonic stem cells present two significant problems, tumors and rejection.

The other type of stem cells, adult stem cells, we are hearing, can be found in many places: umbilical cord blood, fat tissue, bone marrow, muscle, the spleen and baby teeth, just to name a few.

Already doctors have treated diseases with adult stem cells in over 45 clinical trials, and extracting them does not harm anyone; and they are successfully being used. These cells do not present the serious ethical concerns and medical dangers of embryo-destructive research.

We need to focus our efforts on adult stem cells, not speculative and unethical research of embryonic stem cells.

SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM

(Mr. DEFAZIO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DEFAZIO. Madam Speaker, the debate over the future of Social Security is complex and confusing. Even the President seems to be a bit confused. His staged town halls have focused on privatization, which actually makes the finances of Social Security worse.

On Saturday, the President talked falsely about the looming bankruptcy of Social Security. Worst case scenario, Social Security can only pay 75 to 80 percent of benefits starting in 40 to 50 years.

Until yesterday, he has been proposing cutting benefits even more to save the system. But finally yesterday, he opened the door to lifting the cap on the tax, on wages which people pay. Right now if you earn over \$90,000 a year, you do not pay any more Social Security tax. If you earn \$900,000 a year, you pay the Social Security tax at one-tenth the rate of someone who earns \$40,000. That is not fair.

Lifting the cap would assure the solvency of Social Security for at least 75 years and potentially could give a tax break to everybody who earns less than

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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\$9,000 a year under a plan I proposed in the last Congress.

Hopefully, the President will continue down the path of fixing Social Security first before we have a debate about other programs.

ELECTRONIC PRESCRIBING SAVES LIVES AND MONEY

(Mr. MURPHY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MURPHY. Madam Speaker, according to the Institute of Medicine, over 7,000 people die and \$29 billion are wasted every year due to medication errors. Electronic prescribing can change lives and save money.

Medication errors are caused when physicians confuse the names of similar drugs, assign inappropriate dosage levels, issue redundant medications, or lead to harmful drug interactions, and allergic reactions. Electronic prescribing allows doctors to automatically and securely transmit a prescription to a patient's pharmacist. This technology eliminates the human errors caused by unreadable handwriting and improves the quality of care to patients.

Electronic prescribing saves lives by immediately checking a patient's records to alert the physician of potential conflicts with other medical conditions, known allergies, interactions with other active prescriptions and duplicate therapies. Electronic prescribing also saves money by providing information to physicians and patients about lower-cost medications like generics, lets the doctors know which drugs are covered by their health plan, provides valuable access to research, and streamlines billing information and reduces administration costs.

Madam Speaker, we need to make patient safety our national goal and make zero errors with medications a priority in health systems throughout the country. E-prescribing is one tool we can use to make this a reality in saving lives and saving money.

NO FURTHER SUPPLEMENTAL WITHOUT GUARANTEES FOR MEETING THE NEEDS OF OUR SOLDIERS

(Mr. BLUMENAUER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Speaker, I, like most of my colleagues on the floor, was horrified that our soldiers in Iraq had to scavenge junk yards of former Iraqi military equipment for metal and sheet armor to improve their own vehicles. My constituents in the Oregon National Guard were doing this and supplementing it with plywood and sandbags.

We were promised "up-armoring" by the administration, but this is still woefully inadequate. The additional weight puts increased stress on the sus-

pension and drive-train of the vehicles, hampering their operational efficiency and making them slower. But, even worse, the fact that the floor is not protected means that the insurgents are now targeting these up-armored vehicles. Just a couple of weeks ago, I had one of my constituents lose a foot because of such an attack.

Two years later, and after over \$200 billion that Congress has given the administration for the war in Iraq, we should not approve another supplemental budget request without adequate guarantees that, finally, the needs of our soldiers will be met.

SUPPORT THE CLASS ACTION FAIRNESS ACT

(Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, in the past few years, we have witnessed an explosion of interstate class-action lawsuits being filed in our State courts, particularly in certain "magnet" jurisdictions. These "magnet" courts routinely approve settlements in which lawyers receive large fee awards and the class members receive virtually nothing. The result is a growing number of class-action lawsuits that are losing propositions for everyone involved, except the lawyers that bring them.

Madam Speaker, later this morning, we will be debating the Class Action Fairness Act. This legislation closes a loophole in the system by creating Federal jurisdictions over large, multi-State class-action cases. It puts an end to various tricks currently used by some lawyers to stay out of Federal court. And, in addition, this legislation creates several provisions specifically designed to ensure that class members, not their attorneys, are the primary beneficiaries of the class-action process.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this common sense, bipartisan plan.

HELPING AMERICA STAY STRONG WITH STRONG FUNDING

(Ms. KILPATRICK of Michigan asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. KILPATRICK of Michigan. Madam Speaker, I rise to talk about the budget that the President has delivered to the Committee on Appropriations. We began yesterday having hearings on that budget.

We have got to invest in America's families and in America's children.

This budget cuts \$60 billion from Medicaid, an insurance program for children, the disabled, our States. Our States can ill-afford nursing home care for our residents. I am from the State of Michigan, with the highest unemployment rate in the country. We have to invest in our States and our cities.

This budget does not do that. Community development block grants, grants to States and cities that would help cities build their infrastructure and fund various programs throughout the cities. Cuts to first responders and firefighters. Funding drug-free schools. The programs go on. We must find the money to fund these programs. COPS programs, \$40 million.

Madam Speaker, our cities need our help. We have got to do better as appropriators. We have to do better as this Congress. Fund American families, fund the cities and States so that America can stay strong, as God intends.

TWELVE POINT COMMONSENSE PLAN TO RESTORE FISCAL DISCIPLINE

(Mr. ROSS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ROSS. Madam Speaker, our Nation finds itself today in a financial crisis. This year, our deficit is projected to exceed \$589 billion. Last year's deficit was \$412 billion. Seventy percent of that money was borrowed from foreigners, including China and Japan.

We are spending nearly \$1 million more every 60 seconds than we are taking in in this country. On top of that, we are spending nearly \$1 billion a day simply paying interest on the national debt, a debt that today is \$7.6 trillion and rising.

Yesterday, I joined my colleagues of the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition to announce a new 12-point budget plan that promotes commonsense budget reforms. One of those reforms includes the support of a constitutional amendment that would require the Federal Government to balance its budget every year. American families strive every month to live within a balanced budget at home. I do not think it is asking too much to hold our government to the same standard.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me in support of this 12-point, commonsense budget plan that will place our Nation on a path to restore fiscal discipline to our Nation's government.

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WRONG ANSWERS FOR SCHOOLS

(Mr. PENCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PENCE. Madam Speaker, as I had the privilege to write this morning on the editorial page of USA Today, nobody doubts this President's heart for our kids. As a Governor, George W. Bush championed education reform, and, upon being elected President, brought his vision for standards and school choice to Capitol Hill.